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PERSIANA,
THE
NYMPH OF THE SEA.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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PERSIANA,
THE
NYMPH OF THE SEA.

CHAPTER I.

——— Oh ! I have suffer'd
With those that I saw suffer : a brave vessel
(Who had, no doubt, some noble creatures in her)
Dash'd all to pieces. Oh ! the cry did knock
Against my very heart Poor souls, they perish'd !
Had I been any god of pow'r, I would
Have sunk the sea within the earth; or ere
It should the good ship so have swallowed, and
The frighting souls within her.

SHAKESPEAR.

“SEE my dear,” said Mr. Tragony, as he approached his drawing room window after dinner, “ what a tremendous, what an awful spectacle !”

Tragony Castle was situated upon a bold ascent, scarcely a mile from the sea; a noble view of which the drawing room windows commanded.

“It is so indeed,” answered his amiable consort; “and could I divest myself of the idea of the danger, the distress, and probably the destruction, it will bring to thousands, I should enjoy the truly sublime scene.”

“Oh! how it lightens, papa!” said Maria: “let me intreat you to withdraw into a room where we may see less of it. That black cloud which hangs over the sea yonder, the flashes from it are incessant.”

“It is too far off, my love, to injure us, and adds unspeakable magnificence to the picture. Have you no taste, Maria, for this species of the sublime?”

“None

"None in the world papa. I should this moment infinitely prefer a room close enough not only to shut out all prospect of it, but also these bursts of thunder, which grow louder every moment, and the dreadful roaring of the billows."

"Endeavour, my love, to repress these unnecessary fears. Ah!" added he, as he looked through his perspective, "that all I saw had no more reason for alarm! Where the last foaming wave mingles with the horizon I can discern a ship."

"Good God! in what quarter?" said Mrs. Tragony.

"In the center of the view."

"And the wind full to blow her on this rocky coast?"

"Indeed it is. Ah! Maria, what are *their* apprehensions who are en-

closed in her weak sides, their feeble barriers from the foaming deep, when they have the dreadful prospect of being in a few hours dashed to pieces upon the rocks towards which they drive? It must be so unless the wind almost instantly changes."

"God of mercy!" cried Mrs. Tragony, with uplifted eyes, "oh hear their prayers—spare them."

Maria, with eyes swimming in tears, joined in the humane petition.

"May the Almighty look down with mercy on them," said he, "for nothing but a miracle can save them. They drive at an incredible rate towards the fatal place."

"Oh, papa, it must be a dreadful sight: yet will you give me leave to look?"

"I will fix it for you, my dear."

He

J. H. C. S.

P E R S I A N A.

5

He did so: she applied her eye to the glass, whilst he directed it to the object.

“ Oh,” she cries, “ I see it. Good God she seems now hanging in the clouds. Ah! there she goes now darting into the bottom of the opening sea. Alas! she must be lost. No, thank God, thank God, there she is again swimming upright. Look, papa, I fancy they are cutting down her masts, for there goes one with the sails upon it fluttering on the waves. Look now she is driving into that enormous billow—oh it will overwhelm her. Wonderful mercy! there she is again. Oh good God! there is a flash—she is struck with lightening—no I believe it is a signal of distress. Poor creatures! is there no possibility of assist-

ing them? My heart bleeds for them, and my eyes are so misty I can see no longer. Surely, papa, a boat might be sent."

"No boat can live in such a sea. If she can ride it out free from the rocks till the storm is over——"

"Ah, my dear, that is not possible," said Mrs. Tragony, who had now taken the perspective, "for they are driving fast to that ridge of unseen rocks—strangers perhaps to the coast—their destruction is unavoidable, and must be sudden."

Tears flowed from her eyes. Maria threw herself into her arms, and endeavoured to stifle her sobs in her maternal bosom. She kissed the forehead of her darling, but attempted not to suppress

suppress the effusions of a compassionate heart.

In the mean time the unhappy object of their contemplation drew nearer, and was perceptible without the assistance of the perspective: it soon struck on the rocks, and they saw it lay beating, wave after wave breaking over it; yet still it kept upright.

“ They will, I hope, weather it out till the storm abates, of which I see undoubted symptoms, and then they shall have instant assistance.”

Maria's clasped hands and uplifted eyes expressed, without the help of words the fervent prayer of humanity: but Mrs. Tragony, who still held the glass, suddenly exclaimed—“ Ah, my dear, it is impossible, for I discern some planks swimming round her, and

she is much lower in the water, though I can see large chests throwing over board to lighten her. Alas! alas!—see—she leans on one side—oh she is going—sight of horror! How many unhappy mourners, disconsolate widows, friendless orphans, will this fatal hour make! Ah! that next mountainous wave must bring destruction with it—'tis as I feared—she is gone—nothing remains but the trailing of the mast, with the floating of the tattered sails. Father of the Universe, oh look with mercy on those souls that are now to appear before thee.”

CHAPTER II.

Poor orphan ! in the wide world scatter'd,
As budding branch torn from the native tree.

SPENCER.

AS if fatiated with this sacrifice to their fury, the elements before evening were so calmed, that though there was still a considerable swell, Mr. Tragony, ever active in the cause of humanity, ordered some boats to put off to sea, in hopes of saving some lives from the wreck, and would have accompanied them himself had he not been detained by

by the apprehensions of his wife and daughter for his safety.

Three boats with Mr. Tragony's servants and some neighbouring fishermen were sent on this errand of compassion. They picked up the bodies of three seamen, and two servants in rich liveries.

One of the boats brought these to shore, where they were carried to the first cottage: but though they had immediate medical assistance, and every method tried *then* known for the recovery of drowned persons, the humane efforts were without effect: probably for want of that refined skill in restoring suspended animation, which has been since obtained, and which is one
of

of the glories of the present age.

The other two boats paddled as near the wreck as they dared to do, for it formed a kind of whirlpool in the water. That in which were Mr. Tragony's servants rowed to the far part of it, which they perceived by the masts heads that were still above the water, was the side on which she had heeled. They were attracted by something white at the head of the top mast. When the servants came near they perceived with astonishment that what they had seen was the white dress of a lady, which being long and fluttering with the wind had so entangled itself with some of the tackle

as

as to keep her from sinking, though they had reason to fear not from drowning, as her head was hanging in the water.

One of the men, who was an excellent swimmer, jumped into the sea, tore the dress, which was muslin, from the mast, and brought her to the side of the boat, where all assisted to heave her in. She had a child with her, which her arms had stiffened round in all the rigidity of death; the child also had every appearance of being dead. The cloaths of both, though drenched and discoloured by the waves, marked a superior station of life: and though bloated and deformed by the unhappy catastrophe of her fate, it
was

was not difficult to discern in the lady, youth, beauty, and elegance.

Had not the hearts of her assistants been humanized in the service of a master, the leading trait in whose character was benevolence, the object before them must have softened the most rugged nature. Their hard features worked with the emotion of compassion; the tear of pity coursed down their sunburnt cheeks as they plied their oars; and immediately on touching the shore one of them ran off to the cattle, with intelligence of the incident.

It's humane inhabitants did not hesitate what to do: a large and strong sheet was sent by the servant, on which to bear her in the same manner

manner as a wounded officer is carried from the field of battle in his sash; a messenger was dispatched to the next town for a medical gentleman of great eminence, and a bed prepared for her reception.

She was received by the Tragony family in a manner which did honour to their feelings: with great difficulty her arms were untwined from her lovely child, which was a girl apparently about two years old, and every method, every experiment which reason, which custom, or the best medical skill could suggest, were all tried for the restoration of both.

Alas ! in vain were they tried for the reanimation of that unfortunate mother,

mother, though prolonged with unwearied and unceasing assiduity for many hours : but the child, who by being clasped so close had been prevented from swallowing so large a quantity of water, and being at that early age perhaps better able to exist without the respiration of air, quickly gave signs of life.

What were the transports of Maria as she hung over it, when she saw the blood revisit it's beauteous cheek, and it opened its fine blue eyes ! Enviably feelings ! exquisite in proportion to the benevolence which gave them birth, and which formed its sweet, its extatic reward !

“ What a little angel it is, my dear Mama ! Did you ever see any thing

thing half so beautiful? What a complexion! what eyes! Can you speak, my little charmer?"

"Mamma!" said the child: "where is my mamma? Are we still in the water, mamma?—when shall we get out of the nasty water?"

"You are not now in the water, my sweet little creature: and tell me, what is your name?"

"Perféé."

"Perféé?"

"Yes, Perféé—Persiana."

"And what else?"

"Persiana, mamma's darling. Where is mamma? Are we come to see my papa?"

After repeated inquiries, put into a thousand shapes, nothing more was

was to be learned from the child; and unfortunately there was nothing in the pockets of the lady which could enable them to discover either her name or quality, but from her dress and ornaments it was impossible not to conclude she was of superior rank. A valuable watch, with a rich chain, and seals and trinkets of great price, were by her side; a miniature portrait of a gentleman, encircled with brilliants, was suspended by a ribband from her neck. This was carried to the little Persiana; who, weak and languid as she was, started up at the sight of it. "Oh! my papa!" she cried—and snatching it eagerly from the person's hand who held it,

pressed it to her ruby lips: then shewing it to Maria, in whose arms she was—" See my papa :—we are going over the great sea to papa.— Did my mamma send me this ?— Put it round my neck, then I shall be like mamma.—Where is mamma ? is she in the water ?"

To divert her attention, they tied the picture round her little neck, which pleased her highly : the bracelets were also brought to her ; they were pearl, with miniature portraits, set with diamonds.

" Look, Miss," she cried, " this is grand papa—and see here, here is grand mamma."

" These are their pictures, my charmer : but *where* is grand papa and grand mamma ?"

Oh

“ Oh they are in heaven with the angels.”

Besides these costly ornaments were several other little things of value in the pockets of the lady, such as a rich etwee, an enamelled tooth pick case mounted in gold, &c. which evinced both taste and opulence.

When all hope of recovering the lady was at length dissipated, these reliques were all collected and deposited in a little casket. “ We will take care of them,” said Mr. Tragony, “ and we will take care of the child: it’s parents *must* be of consequence. There will undoubtedly be enquiries made after it by it’s remaining relations, and they shall find we have not been deficient

in the duties of benevolence. But as it may be supposed that all perished with the vessel, we will announce the child's safety to the world in the public papers."

Accordingly advertisements were inserted in most of the London papers, but without effect, for no sort of notice was taken of them: and the little Persiana, in the tender attentions of this humane family, soon losing all remembrance of former attachments, became happy in it's protection. Could the whole kingdom have afforded a more felicitous asylum to the helpless and friendless orphan? The breasts of Mr. and Mrs. Tragony were the residence of every virtue, and the soul of
their

their amiable daughter a fair transcript of their own.

Maria at the time of the shipwreck was about twelve years old, but with a mind matured beyond her age: at her earnest importunity the entire care of the little girl was delegated to her; “and I have thought of a name for her, mamma,” said she, “for you know we *must* give her some name: she shall if you please be called *Merfille*, which is you know *sea-maid*, a name of some propriety, is it not, as she was taken from that element?”

See then the little *Persiana Merfille* under the care of her young patroness; who, proud of the charge, exerted her utmost powers for her

instruction and amusement. Never was governess more attentive to a pupil; never was pupil more docile, or quicker in imbibing instruction; and their affection was warmly reciprocal.

Mr. Tragony, who carried his ideas "beyond the fixed and settled rules," was so perfectly persuaded that the parents of the child were of quality, to whom she would be one time or other restored, that he would have thought himself guilty of a most unpardonable neglect of the duty imposed on him by the immediate hand of Providence, which had consigned her to his care by so uncommon an incident, had he omitted any thing in her instruction
and

and education to render her worthy of them; no pains therefore nor any expence were spared in either.

Though at a great distance from the capital, Tragony Castle was not far from the provincial town, from whence masters were drawn for the instruction of Maria in music, dancing, drawing, the languages, &c. of their instruction Persiana partook also, and when the education of Maria was finished, their visits were continued to the fair foundling.

CHAPTER III.

The seas ran high—'twas such a day as this
When first I saw Ulysses !

HUGHES

ABOUT six years after the providential rescue of Persiana from the waves, Mr. Tragony was suddenly snatched from his family by an apoplectic fit : but though he made no pecuniary provision for his fair ward, as he used to call her and actually regarded her, yet his widow, blessed with equal benevolence of heart, and governed by the same principles,

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principles, left her no reason to lament that omission; she was treated with equal tenderness, and her education went on with the same assiduous care.

Mr. Tragony, whose temper had inclined him to retirement, had lived almost secluded from the world in his family mansion, little known and less visited: but soon after his death Mrs. Tragony, in compliance with her daughter's wishes, who was desirous of a more expanded society, took a house for the winter at Trenton, a town not far distant, where they increased their acquaintance, and partook of those diversions the place afforded.

The heiress of a large fortune will never be destitute of professed admirers,

admirers, though she may be deficient in beauty or grace : a girl therefore who possessed both, like Maria, with the universal magnet, gold, added, may be supposed to attract all hearts : her own however remained untouched amidst innumerable candidates for her hand, and having amused herself awhile with their flatteries, she became disgusted with their unvarying and senseless reiteration, and at the return of spring accompanied her mother back to Tragony Castle without one sigh of regret.

The summer past pleasingly on in rural amusements, occasional visits to and from their acquaintance at Trenton, and in the instruction of Persiana.

The

The sun was approaching the autumnal equinox, when after a very stormy and tempestuous night, the morning appearing remarkably pleasant, Maria and her pupil took a walk towards the sea, a promenade of which Persiana was particularly fond; for besides enjoying a fine view of the ocean, the noblest of all objects, she generally, after such a night as the foregoing, found upon the strand a number of marine productions, and curiosities, which she treasured up with great care, for the furnishing a little kind of grotto in the garden, in the forming and ornamenting of which Mrs. Tragony indulged her.

At such times also she used to engage Maria in a minute detail of every

every circumstance relative to the fate of her mother, and at her request the fatal rocks on which the vessel stranded had been so often pointed out, that she was perfectly acquainted with their situation, though they were not discernable but at very low water.

Inviting as they had thought the morning, they found the wind too blustering, and the sea too rough and swelling for their usual promenade on the beach; but unwilling to lose their walk, they took their way to a bold and rocky promontory, which commanded a view the most extensive; and Maria, being fatigued with the rough ascent, and the wind blowing in her face, sat
down

down on a piece of rock, and Persiana by her.

One ship only was in sight, which, as their prospect was confined to the main, of course engrossed their attention.

Living so near the sea, often conversing on nautical subjects with her poorer neighbours, and now and then going out on little sailing parties, had rendered Maria in some measure acquainted with the common modes of navigating a ship.

As this vessel approached, Maria fancied she made a very singular appearance; her sails were neither properly spread or furled, but hung flapping and awkwardly on her masts; and she seemed to be driven
the

the current, both which set in for the shore, than guided by her pilot, though the weather was by no means sufficiently boisterous to deprive her of the direction of her rudder.

However governed, she came forwards at a great rate, and it was certain, unless her course was suddenly changed, she must strike on those very rocks on which the mother of Persiana was lost.

These conjectures and apprehensions Maria communicated to her young companion, whose mind, susceptible of the keenest and strongest sensations, was alarmed at a danger so similar to that which had deprived her of every natural friend; she became frantic to alarm the mariners, who were probably ignorant
of

of the coast, with their perilous situation, and ran like a lapwing to the hut of a poor fisherman which was near the cliff to prevail on him to put off his boat for that purpose: But the old man, who found in his own breast no emotions of compassion sufficiently strong to combat the danger of the attempt, made so many objections to going out on so rough a sea, and at last on her teasing, though he pretended to consent, was such a long time preparing himself, that the very thing happened she had been anxious to prevent—the ship struck upon the rocks, where it lay beating so violently, that it was not possible it could remain long without going to pieces.

Maria,

Maria, expecting now every moment to see boats put out from the ship to save the crew, and that the strand would in a short time be covered with sailors, was hurrying home; but Persiana, impelled by an uneasy curiosity to watch the fate of the vessel, persuaded her to stay a little longer; and no boats appearing, she ran down to the beach where the old man still lingered with his boat, and emptied the contents of her purse into his hand to induce him to put off to the ship and offer his assistance.

This stimulus to humanity would perhaps have been insufficient had not Maria, who by this time joined her, reinforced it by a promise much more ample than her little friend's

friend's purse contained; and he at last consented, having called his son to him, whom he perceived at a little distance, and took into the boat with him.

As they approached the ship, which stood upright wedged in as it were amongst the rocks, they were greatly surprised to hear no bustle of seamen and not one appear.

"She must have been left in the storm, veather, to be zure," said the young fellow.

"The better then for me and thee," replied the other; "we may get some pickings."

"True, we might, but who would wenter for them? not I, for to my thinking she is now sinking."

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D

Fool!

“ Fool ! she may beat a pieces, but how can she sink as she lies ? I tell thee we may have good booty, come along.”

Whilst they were thus talking a beautiful large curl-coated spaniel ran whining up upon the deck, and the young man with a wantonness of cruelty threw a large stone at him which happened to be in the boat, but was so bad a marksman as not to hit the dog, though he frightened him, and sent him yelping down from whence he came.

They now clambered into the vessel eager as wolves in the scent of prey ; but entering the cabin where the dog had taken refuge, were equally astonished and disappointed to see lying

ing on the floor a genteelly dressed young man.

He was alive, but did not appear to observe their entrance. He seemed to be in an agony of pain, and his eyes rolled round in an unmeaning glare.

They looked at each other—both conceived the same inhuman thought, yet conscious of the guilt, and aware of the danger, as they knew the young ladies waited on the beach for their return, the proposition died on their lips.

Their ideas were however sufficiently evident to each other without the help of words; for it is easy from what passes in a man's own mind to develop in a similar situation the sentiments of a kindred soul.

“ No,” said the old man, replying to the cast of his son’s eye, “ it will be *safer* to carry him on shore. Young Madam Tragony will reward us well if nobody else do, and that must content us *now*. What chear, master, what chear ?” added he to the gentleman, but received no other answer than a wild stare, and a groan of anguish. Without any farther ceremony they prepared to carry him out of the cabbin : one taking him by the shoulders, the other by the legs, when they discovered that one of them was dreadfully broken. A dirty mattrafs laid upon the floor, off which he had rolled in the agitations of his pain. “ We had better put him on that there thing, veather, and carry him upon it,” said the sno.

They

They did so, got him with great difficulty down the ship's side into the boat, (into which the dog also jumped after them) and paddled to land.

Young Madam Tragony and her *protege* were standing upon the beach impatient for their return: they ran down to the water's edge; the dog sprang out of the boat, swam to them, fawned upon them; then plunged into the water again, scrambled into the boat, and stood whining over his master.

The two fishermen brought the gentleman to land: but being unable to carry him to Tragony Castle, the young man was dispatched for assistance, and the young ladies watched their charge, whilst the old man took care of his boat; but he took no kind of notice

of them or any thing else; and had been entirely passive in all the efforts to bring him from the ship. Maria and Persiana agreed that he looked about four and twenty, that his dress was that of a gentleman, that his person appeared elegant, and his features, though distorted with pain, handsome.

Assistance arriving he was carried on the mattrass to Tragony Castle, where the lady of that hospitable mansion with equal prudence and benevolence had soon every thing ready for his reception, and a skilful surgeon sent for, who not only found an exceeding bad fracture of the limb, but a very alarming contusion on the head, which had occasioned the wildness and stupor.

By

By the extreme care and skill with which this gentleman was attended, he was sooner in a state of convalescence than was at first expected.

As soon as it was safe to talk with him, Mrs. Tragony signified a desire of easing the apprehensions under which his friends must necessarily suffer in the uncertainty of his fate: but his reply was, that he had none near or dear enough to render his absence of any consequence to their feelings; he only wished to have a servant sent for, whom he had left ill of a fever at Trenton.

When he became able to converse, he told her that he was called Sir George Patterson, that he had been at Trenton races, where he had formed a party with several other gentlemen

to shoot sea fowl on P—— island, for which purpose they had hired a vessel to convey them; that they had found very fine sport, but after the fatigues of the day, had made so exceedingly free with the wine they had brought with them, and had very imprudently made the seamen such partakers of their jollity, that every creature returned on board in a state of intoxication. Unfortunately a storm soon after their quitting the island overtook their ill managed vessel, and by way of dispelling it's terrors from their minds they had done the very thing which they ought not to have done, and converted their inebriety into madness by swallowing large quantities of spirituous liquors; when each thinking himself exceedingly clever in navigating
the

the ship, employed themselves in such a manner as without doubt added to the danger of their situation. He said he believed himself to be the soberest man amongst them, but after some hours of confusion he remembered nothing more, than clambering one of the masts to assist in furling a sail, from which period he had no recollection till he found himself on a bed in a strange apartment.

The circumstances which followed, as afterwards appeared, were these: Sir George fell from the mast, and his companions took him up in a state of insensibility, carried him into the cabin; where, after such applications as the state of their understandings and the hurry of their situation allowed, he giving no signs of life, they concluded him

him dead ; and in a short time after a leak being discovered in the ship, their fears encreased to such a degree, that fancying themselves much nearer land than they really were, they made the seamen hoist out their boat, and every one quitted the vessel, without thinking of the body of their friend, and after suffering great hardships, at last got on shore on one of the islands of S—.

CHAPTER IV.

I

Have giv'n you here a thread of mine own life,
Or that for which I live.

SHAKESPEAR.

WHEN Sir George Patterson was sufficiently recovered to see company in his apartment the young ladies as well as Mrs. Tragony frequently visited him. His recent great obligations to this amiable family rendered him perfectly awake to their merit: he discerned the goodness of Mrs. Tragony's heart shining in her countenance, and perceived her greatest pleasure was in imparting happiness to others. Plain, unaffected,

unaffected, and unceremonious in her manner, she possessed the principles of true politeness unincumbered with its unnecessary forms; and totally unacquainted with the great world, her good nature and good sense preserved her as effectually from the most distant rudeness as if she had been educated in the most refined Court in Europe.

Maria, though not critically handsome, had that spirit and animation in her countenance which perhaps please more than beauty: her person, though small, was extremely elegant; she played beyond mediocrity both on the harpsichord and harp; and accompanied them with a voice, which if it could not boast very extensive powers, yet possessed a most enchanting sweetness;

ness; her conversation had great vivacity, and her mind was well informed.

Persiana, then about ten years old, he thought the most beautiful and most pleasing child he had ever seen; the new fallen snow was not of a purer whiteness than her skin, through which you discerned the blood meandering in a thousand azure veins; a profusion of the palest auburn hair played in glossy ringlets on her elegant turned shoulders, and shading her forehead, half hid her fine blue eyes; the roses of health bloomed on her dimpled cheek in their richest glow, her lips shamed the coral, and her small and even teeth were of the most pearly whiteness.

With a memory the most tenacious and an extensive capacity, no pains or expence had been spared in her education:

tion: so that in her acquirements of knowledge, and her accomplishments in the lighter and more ornamental matters, she was for her years a perfect prodigy.

If Sir George found the family of Tragony Castle agreeable, they were no less charmed with him. Polished manners, a soft and insinuating address, a perfect knowledge of men and things, aided by a liberal education, much good sense, and more vivacity, would have rendered his conversation pleasing in every circle; it was peculiarly so then in one whose amusements were contracted to such a narrow boundary, and whose acquaintance comprehended not one character half so amiable.

Maria, whose heart had been hitherto unsusceptible of the tender passion,

sion, became imperceptibly enslaved ; and Sir George, whose penetration was extremely quick in whatever related to love, discerned very clearly his power e'er she suspected it herself.

Matrimony had been with him, till this time, an object of derision ; but he now reflected that a girl of large fortune, pleasing person, intelligent mind, and elegant manners, unvitiated by a town education, and of whose affection for him he had the most unequivocal proofs, was an object worthy his most serious attention ; and that if he ever *did* enter the pale, it was impossible for him to choose better.

His mind softened by sickness, his heart subdued by gratitude, soon fixed his wavering inclinations in favour of a union so reasonable, so desirable, and
accelerated

accelerated a declaration of his sentiments.

Mrs. Tragony, to whom her daughter very properly referred him, with that explicitness which became her character, at once sincere yet unwounding, after expressing a very warm approbation of him as far as their present acquaintance had enabled her to judge, hinted a wish to enquire farther into his conduct and character, e'er her final decision on so important a point, in which her daughter's happiness was so much involved.

Sir George acknowledging the reasonableness of the desire, confessed that his conduct hitherto would not stand the test of strict investigation. Educated with all the indulgence of an only child, becoming by his parent's death,

death early master of his conduct; chusing, young-man-like, his acquaintance more for the brilliance of their talents than for the purity of their principles. In such a predicament was it possible *not* to fall into error? Could a youth so circumstanced escape the contagion of vice?

But he had seen the folly of the life in which he had been engaged: he was charmed with the beauty of virtue; he was determined on a total reformation of his conduct; and his resolution could not fail of being permanent if she would honour him with the hand of her charming daughter.

But that after making this frank confession, in which he entreated her lenity for *one* part of his conduct, he wished her to make every possible enquiry: he would himself enable her

so to do by directing her to those people who were best able to inform her : she would find, that though he had been no anchorite in his pleasures, he had never been guilty of any action incompatible with the character of a gentleman and a man of honour.

All due enquiries *were* made; but Sir George having thus obviated the only objection—the sensuality of his character, Mrs. Tragony finding it in other respects truly estimable, no longer hesitated to put him in possession of the dearest treasure she had on earth; he was indissolubly united to the amiable Maria, whom if he loved not with that passionate fondness which she felt for him, he yet esteemed as the first and best of her sex.

CHAPTER V.

Ah! then! instead of love-enliven'd cheeks,
Of sunny features, and of ardent eyes,
With flowing rapture bright; dark looks succeed

Suffus'd and glaring with untender fires;
A clouded aspect and a burning cheek,
Where the whole poison'd soul, malignant, sits,
And frightens love away.

THOMSON.

MRS. Tragony survived the union of her beloved daughter with Sir George Patterson only three years; during which she had the felicity to observe that he made the tenderest and most attentive of husbands. Lady Patterson had just lain in of her second

E. 2 child,

child, which was a lovely girl, as the first was a fine boy, when Mrs. Tragony, who had been some days unwell, was seized with so violent a fever as to deprive her instantly of her senses, and five days after of her life.

She, no more than her husband, had made any provision for Persiana in her will, depending perhaps on her one time or other being restored to her friends, which would render such a bequest unnecessary; and relying on the affection of her daughter, who found no restraint to her generous love for that orphan from her husband, among the blemishes in whose character avarice was by no means conspicuous.

The death of her mother had nearly proved fatal to Maria: a long and dangerous illness was the consequence
of

of the perturbation and grief of her mind acting on her weakened frame, which left her so extremely languid and spiritless, that change of air and objects were thought absolutely necessary; and Sir George, whose tenderness was unabated, took her to town; thinking the novelty of the scene, and a round of diversions, the most probable means of dispelling the melancholy in which she was involved. But contrary to his expectations the experiment failed; her health indeed was amended, but a languor, a gloom still hung on her spirits, which rendered her incapable of amusing, or being amused.

A vapourish wife is but an insipid companion for a young and lively husband: Sir George, who at first had been exceedingly attentive, grew by

degrees remits; that sprightly good humour which had given zest to their domestic pleasures was flown; his home afforded him but little pleasure; Lady Patterson was seldom willing to accompany him abroad; yet abroad he was obliged to seek for amusement, and he by degrees became perfectly reconciled to her absence; former acquaintances were renewed, and with them, unhappily, former habits recurred.

Time, medicine, and amusement, at length had their usual effects: Lady Patterson regained her chearfulness, and again mingled with the world; Sir George, who esteemed her highly, still treated her with great politeness, but it was not long ere she remarked it was *mere* politeness, and she too plainly perceived

perceived a growing coldness in his manner.

An only and beloved child, Lady Patterson, from her cradle, had scarcely known contradiction: this unlimited indulgence, which would have had very ill effects on a weak mind, or a bad temper, rendered *her*, who had equal good sense and good humour, neither whimsical nor imperious; but it however unfitted her for bearing with patience the common crosses and vexations of life, and rendered her incapable of practising those honest arts, by which domestic happiness is preserved; for she, whose own inclinations had never been thwarted, who had been habitually taught to expect the most implicit yieldingness to herself, was ill qualified for the arduous task of studying the wishes, or humour-

ing the will of others, and winning the refractory heart to it's duty, by soft compliances, and all the irresistible charms of tender blandishment.

She loved Sir George with ardour, and the first idea of his wavering affection filled her soul with agony; incapable of concealing her feelings, she reproached him with it, with many professions of unaltered love, he denied the charge, and for a time persuaded her she was mistaken.

But the tormenting sentiment having once found entrance, soon recurred: reproaches were repeated with more bitterness, and were combated with less tender asseveration of affection: tears, ill humour, gloom, ensued. Sir George was now less than ever at home, and the impolitic Maria, instead of endeavouring to render his house agreeable

ble during those hours which he spent there, and to win by obligingness his longer stay, drove him from thence by her upbraidings for not seeing him oftener; and instead of attempting to allure his heart back from those new attachments she suspected, by those attractions of good humour, vivacity, and understanding, which had first captivated him, she quenched every remaining spark of partiality by cloudy looks, sarcastic speeches, and sullen demeanors.

Ah! why, you wives who weep the neglect of your straying husbands, why will you give their wanton mistresses such advantage over you? *Your* features are distorted by frowns and anger, *theirs* embellished with smiles and good humour; you *repel* the wanderer by petulance and reproaches, they *in-*
vite

vite him with kindness and blandishment: ah! why will you enable him to justify his conduct to his own heart, for preferring an amiable to a disgusting object? Let your contest with your rival be the art of pleasing: let her not excel you in complaisance, cheerfulness, and good humour. Equal to her in these irresistible attractions, superior to her in virtue, in native worth, in the charms of a cultivated mind, must you not in the end be triumphant? After a little youthful excursiveness, the charm of novelty once dispelled, reason will reassume her throne, and your empire in his heart will be re-established on a firmer foundation than before.

Happy had it been for Lady Patterson had sentiments such as these actuated her conduct! Sir George, whose
really

really generous spirit might have been influenced in her favour by tenderness and endearment, became irreclaimable by the fury of her disappointed passion: she had the folly to bribe his servant to betray the assignation of his master, and the madness to break in upon it. It would be disagreeable to delineate the scene which followed: she had now made herself the aggressor; her violence was resented as an injury; the breach became irreparable, and the husband and wife separated.

The wretched Lady Patterfson retired with her two children and Persiana to Tragony Castle: but though she deeply regretted the *effects* of her conduct, yet, viewing her own actions through too partial a medium, she was not perfectly awakened to the *errors* of it: she reviewed the past with more
of

of bitterness than remorse, and love and anger bore an equal place in her perturbed bosom.

Separated from a husband so fondly loved, the world to her lost it's charms; she secluded herself entirely from it, and enjoyed no pleasure but in the education of her children, to which she gave all her time and attention, and in which she was greatly assisted by Persiana, who in her efforts on the occasion seemed to wish, in some measure, to repay the obligation she was under for her own education; and the advantage was reciprocal; for knowledge was not only derived to the young people by her instructions in a much more pleasing manner than from their mother, who in the disappointments and bitterneſſs of life had lost much of that sweetness of temper for which
her

her youth had been distinguished; but her own sentiments became more refined and clear by communication; precepts of virtue were more determinate and strongly fixed by the attempt to inculcate them on others; and accomplishments of every kind more perfect by constant exertion and practice.

In the proper instruction of young people it is not only necessary to lay down rules of conduct, to inculcate those of virtue and morality, but it is also indispensably necessary for their being firmly fixed in the mind, to assign the *reasons*, to investigate the *principles* on which they are built: this task, which she willingly set herself, strengthened her own mind; and she grew more confirmed in every virtue, as she was more practised in every branch

branch of knowledge, by deep enquiries and constant exercise.

But shut from all society but Lady Patterson and her family, whilst her mind acquired strength and her virtue the firm basis of principle, she remained entirely ignorant of the world: all her ideas of it and it's manners were drawn from books; but as few of them were of the modern school, and novels were utterly excluded, she wanted even the little information which *they* could have given her of *real* life; some of which may pervert the mind, and give a romantic cast to the manners; but such must be allowed to be the refined taste of the present age, and in general it's just way of thinking, that few works which militate against either are tolerated.

Think

Think not, reader, I am speaking *ironically*; for refinement of taste, justness of observation, *are* the characteristics of the present age: and though you may find many very insipid novels, there are few injurious; but they are in general faithful pictures of living manners; and, well chosen, impart to the inexperienced mind much knowledge of the world.

Perhaps for much of their innocence, if not of their use, they are indebted to those tribunals of criticism to which every publication is brought. The reviewers may sometimes want taste—in other words may differ from *mine*, for you know—

'Tis with our judgments as our watches, none
Go just alike, yet each believes his *own*.

I have known them commend works
which *I* have thought vapid; disap-
prove

prove others which to *me* were pleasing; but the obscene, or the immoral writer, however sparkling with wit, however abounding with ingenuity, has ever from them received the deserved lash: his sophistry detected, divested of the glare of talents misapplied, the culprit has been ever held forth to public view: and I have always regarded it as a peculiar felicity to the nation, that the licentiousness of it's freedom meets so necessary a check; religion and morality so salutary a guard; and the youthful and unsuspecting mind so proper a warning of latent poison.

But though unacquainted with modern manners, with the customs which fashion has dictated, the vices which it has sanctioned, Persiana was not ignorant of the principles by which the conduct

duct of life *ought* to be actuated : well versed in the immutable laws of virtue, honour, and truth, by *them* she governed her own heart, without enquiring how far they were deviated from by the rest of the world.

Her temper was a happy mixture of softness and firmness; she would put herself to a thousand inconveniences to serve another, and always forgot her own predilections when the inclinations of those she loved in the least militated against them; but this excessive yieldingness went no farther than in matters of pleasure and amusement; in those of virtue and honour she was unbending; her mind was too informed, her heart too good, to desert their standard to an open enemy; and her penetration too acute not to detect the sophistry of a feigned friend.

For much of this firmness of temper perhaps she was indebted to the ideas which she knew were entertained of the quality of her parents : she had early imbibed the belief of a noble birth, and with it a resolution of never acting unworthy of it ; it inspired her both with a dignity of soul and deportment ; divested the vivacity of her spirits of trifling and levity, and if it rendered her jealous of the respect she thought her due from others, it joined with the natural sweetness of her temper to render her courteous and affable to all. It might be said to make her proud, but surely it was the most salutary pride which ever possessed a human heart ; it suppressed the follies of youth, and bridled it's petulancies ; checked every indiscretion, and crushed every improper inclination in it's birth :

it

it was the pride of true nobility, the nobility of the *soul*; which, without the adventitious advantages of wealth and grandeur, can distinguish itself from the plebeian, and give spirit and energy to a character, which without it would have been too soft and timid.

Such was the *mind* of our heroine: the connoisseur in beauty could find no fault in each separate feature of her face; and the *tout ensemble* was striking, was interesting in the extreme. Her person might perhaps be thought too low by the admirer of majestic beauty, being scarcely the middle size; yet there was as much mingled dignity and ease in her air, as there was elegance in her form; and her manners had that *je ne sçai quoi*, that *indescribable* charm which gave grace inexpressible to her most trivial action.

Thus charming, was Persiana unknown to the world in the solitude of Tragony Castle.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear ;
Full many a flower is doom'd to blush unseen,
And waste it's fragrance in the desert air.

Persuaded of the nobility of her birth, and thinking it impossible—tho' she had not read romances—but time must disclose the mystery, she saw with regret many summers pass, and no signs of it's being unravelled. Dependence could never wear a more pleasing form, yet still it was dependence. To Lady Patterson she owed every thing, who loved her with a truly maternal affection ; with a love more than filial she returned it ; and her gratitude was so excessive, that her heart was really oppressed with a sense of obligation ;

obligation: she panted for methods more expressive than words to display it: she devoted herself to the children with the most assiduous care; and after every effort sighed in anguish at perceiving it unreturnable. As she possessed the extremest delicacy, the most exquisite perception, had not Lady Patterfon been nearly as delicate as herself, her situation would have been miserable; the tone of a voice would have distressed her, a look wounded her more than the grossest insults common minds: it was enough to a soul like her's that she felt herself dependant: being reminded of it would not have lessened the sense of the benefits she had received, but it would have rendered the weight of obligation for them insupportable.

CHAPTER VI.

Oh fly! 'Tis dire Suspicion's mien,
And meditating plagues unseen
The Sore'refs hither bends.

AKENSIDE.

PERSIANA had about reached her eighteenth year in this retirement, when Sir George Patterson being seized with a slow, nervous fever, the lowness of spirits incident to that distemper brought on remorse for his conduct to an amiable woman, whose only fault had originated in a too fervid affection for him; and induced him to write to her a penitential letter expressing a wish to see, and be forgiven by her.

Trans-

Transported at the idea of reconciliation, and equally alarmed at his illness, Lady Patterson left the children to the care of the fair foundling, and flew up to London to her beloved husband; where a mutual acknowledgment of error, and as mutual a remission of it, took place.

In a very short time Sir George found his health much amended, and for its perfect reestablishment his lady accompanied him to Bath; which there being happily effected, he became eager to revisit Tragony Castle, and once more press his children to his heart.

It was in an afternoon early in the spring, when Lady Patterson, exulting in her husband's returned affection, and happy in his love, which he every moment assured her of, entered with

him the hall of her family mansion; promising herself there the same days of felicity which she enjoyed in the early part of their marriage; no rival to dispute his heart, no amusement but what he partook with her.

The moment they entered the parlour, Persiana, who had been apprized of their coming, flew down, a child in each hand, to receive and congratulate them. She led them hastily to their mother. "Behold," she cried, "Madam, my lovely charge in perfect health: you must introduce them to Sir George: from *your* arms he will receive them with double transport.

The mother, with the tear of rapture glittering in her eye, put them into the arms of their father; who clasped them fervently to his bosom, kissed their eyes, their lips, their foreheads,

heads, and seemed wild with extatic pleasure; gazed in their faces, placed them on his knees, and again caressed them; while Lady Patterson sat down on the sofa by him, and leaning her head on his shoulder, wetted it with the delicious tear of unutterable joy: and Persiana, with a mind formed for the highest intellectual felicity, partook with indescribable delight of the enchanting scene.

When the first enthusiasm of pleasure was passed, Lady Patterson presented Persiana to Sir George; and he, not recollecting the years which had flown since he saw her, was astonished when under that name was introduced to him the most beautiful and elegant young woman he had ever seen.

His eye spoke his extreme admiration. So lost was he indeed in the
contem-

contemplation of her person, that he heard not what she said, and he even forgot to make the customary compliments.

He soon however recovered himself. " Bless me, Miss Merfille," he cried, " how you are grown ! What an alteration has a short time made ! Ever lovely, you are now dazzling. Upon my life I know not whether I address a mortal or a divinity."

This extravagant speech, the effect of surprise, operating on hurried and unsettled spirits, confused the person to whom it was addressed, and gave a pang to the heart of Lady Patterson : that heart which was vulnerable to error only on the side of affection ; the excess of her love for her husband rendered her impatient of his least neglect and jealous of his most trivial preference.

ference. Fully sensible of the beauty of Persiana's person and of the attraction of those accomplishments which she herself had assisted with assiduity to bring to perfection, and which had hitherto constituted her pride and her pleasure; she contemplated them in that moment in competition with herself, and shrunk in dismay at the contrast.

True, she herself was not thirty; but the canker grief had fed on her damask cheek, and, anticipating age, had robbed it of its bloom; neglect had divested her person of much of its elegance; a long depression of spirits rendered her conversation less animated, less amusing; and from losing the wish to please, she had also lost many of those attractive graces of manner which have a power to charm beyond real beauty.

These

These were the humiliating reflections of Lady Patterson, as she remarked the eager glances of Sir George on the fair foundling. She sighed: yet could she envy perfections to which she herself had given birth? could she be jealous of a heart in which she had planted every virtue? could she look with malignancy on charms which received their present irresistible irradiations from the contemplation of *her* happiness? Impossible! She bade far hence the criminal sensation, smiled with affection on Persiana, clasped her husband's hand to her throbbing bosom in cordial love, caressed her children, and was again all herself.

Several days winged their rapid flight in a most delightful manner: if
Sir

Sir George was at first charmed with the personal graces of Persiana—

——The faultless form,
Shaped by the hand of Harmony, the cheek
Where the live crimson, thro' the native white
Soft shooting o'er the face, diffuses bloom
And every nameless grace: the parted lip
Like the red rose bud wet with morning dew,
Breathing delight ;
The look resistless, piercing to the soul,
And by the soul inform'd :

How much more, when by conversing with her he perceived—

The feeling heart, simplicity of life,
And elegance and taste : pure social love,
The tender-looking charity, intent
On gentle deeds, and shedding tears thro' smiles ;
Undaunted truth and dignity of mind !

I ask not my reader to pardon these quotations, for can any one describe a beautiful object so exquisitely as the inimitable Thomson ?

Sir

Sir George was a connoisseur in beauty. His understanding was above the common standard ; he therefore felt all the power of such a person and such a mind. He was too young and too sensual for platonism, yet found it impossible not to love ; and his vows of constancy to his Maria vanished into air, as he gazed on the face, as he listened to the voice of her lovely *protege* ; who, unconscious of the effect of her charms, took every opportunity of recommending herself ; and trying, as she said, to render herself agreeable to the husband of her benefactress, whom she esteemed as a most amiable man, and found peculiar pleasure in his conversation, replete at once with wit and knowledge.

That she had attained her purpose, and rendered herself *perfectly agreeable*,
was

was too evident to the watchful eye of jealousy. Yet though pained at perceiving his extreme admiration, Lady Patterson was still so much mistress of herself as to behave to Persiana with her usual kindness, blaming her own injustice for loving her less, because she was an object so worthy of love. Of the innocence of her heart, of the goodness of her principles, she was perfectly sensible; but in her own eyes her husband was the most charming of all men, and she thought it scarcely possible to resist his pleaded passion. She sighed that her ill fortune had brought two such objects together, whose reciprocal attractions must be irresistible, and pondered upon some means of separating them before the mischief became irreparable.

After much thinking, she recollected a female relation who lived at some distance,

distance, who had discovered a very great affection for Persiana, and frequently pressed her to spend some time with her; but when it was mentioned before Sir George, as a visit which had been long in contemplation and only waited a fit opportunity, he declared himself so decidedly against it, that Lady Patterson felt a rising tide of ill humour, which though her prudence endeavoured to suppress, an expression of it escaped in short answers and a peevish tone of voice to our heroine, who remarked it with equal pain and astonishment.

Lady Patterson by her husband's manner was not only confirmed in her suspicion, but perceived that his love was deeper rooted than she had apprehended, and she began now to hate the innocent object of it. Some re-
mains

mains of reason and good nature indeed suggested the propriety of warning a young heart, hitherto so virtuous, of its danger; but thinking it was impossible but she must have perceived his passion, and entertained a mutual one, she spurned the humane idea, as subjecting herself to the innocent triumph of a successful rival, by acknowledging her power.

It was now become a task of the utmost difficulty to put on a face of tolerable civility to this hated rival, yet this she attempted to do, that by her unsuspecting manner the guilty pair might be thrown off their guard, which would give her an opportunity of detecting them, and enable her to discard the ungrateful object of her bounty to shame and ignominy.

Lady Patterson however, in spite of

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her

her resolution, was so ill a dissembler, that Persiana, tho' unable to divine the cause, too plainly perceived a total change in her behaviour, and imagining it originated in some latent uneasiness in her situation, redoubled every effort to amuse and please; but was shocked to discover her assiduities repelled with an air of disgust.

Habituated from infancy to all the tender attentions, all the kind expressions of the fondest affection, how must such a mind as Persiana's suffer, not only at their sudden depravation, but also at their being succeeded by a demeanor the most opposite? to behold herself suddenly, and without any seeming reason, become from an object of love the subject of an inveterate hate? In vain she sought in herself for the cause of this astonishing change:

change: she was sensible of none herself, and could only wonder at it in another. She lamented it in secret, for tears were her only relief, and she vented no reproach but sighs. Of the illicit love of Sir George, she had not the most distant idea: Lady Patterson had always been to her as an indulgent sister, and she regarded Sir George as a brother. He was lively and instructive; she delighted in his conversation; his notice, his attentions were grateful to her, as an assurance that her wishes to render herself pleasing to the beloved husband of her benefactress had not been unsuccessful; and she now found in them a soothing resource, when the ill humour of Lady Patterson had driven her from her presence.

CHAPTER VII.

Sincere themselves, ah ! too secure to find
The common bosom like their own sincere !
'Tis it's own guilt alarms the jealous mind ;
'Tis her own poison bids the viper fear.

SHENSTONE.

SIR George Patterson in his lady's unwonted ill humour first discovered the symptoms of her jealousy, which he endeavoured by a more guarded conduct to obviate : but she, whose natural penetration was sharpened by that eager eyed passion, saw through the thin veil of indifference he affected : she perceived that though he strove to refrain being attentive to Persiana before her, yet that he took every opportunity

portunity of being alone with her, that they were frequently in the garden together, and the discovery drove her almost into madness.

Sir George, who amidst Persiana's beauties, discerned as clearly those virtues which forbade him to hope their possession, would perhaps have continued to devour his sighs in silence, and in the hopelessness of his passion found it's cure, had not the imprudence of Lady Patterson's conduct pointed to his intriguing genius a method of gratifying it.

Persiana, wounded by Lady Patterson's insults, and unhappy, upon those occasions, when she found her griefs too great for restraint, sought in solitude to unburthen by tears her almost bursting heart; and often went into the garden to be the more unobserved, as

in her chamber she was liable to be interrupted by the children, who were exceedingly fond of her, and teased her by their enquiries into the cause of her sorrow: Sir George, as Lady Patterson observed, at such times would seek her out, and by the tenderness of his manner, and his soothing address, endeavour to console her.

He at first found it very difficult to make her speak upon the subject of her uneasiness: deeply as she felt the severity of Lady Patterson's behaviour, and wholly unconscious of giving any reason for the change, she felt an extreme reluctance to arraign the conduct of her hitherto kind benefactress; and when Sir George, by execrating his wife's ill humour, drew her out, it was only to form excuses for what she could not account: she imputed it to
some

some unknown cause in herself, and besought Sir George, as her friend, that he would assist her in discovering her fault, that she might incur the displeasure of her patroness no more.

But having once made it the subject of conversation, it afterwards more readily recurred: Sir George justified her to herself, though at the expence of his wife. Conscience and reason were on his side, though she received with reluctance the opinion of Lady Patterson's caprice, and could not by any arguments be induced to think that the cruelty of her present conduct cancelled the obligations she had conferred in her infancy; yet he saw with transport that her eyes sparkled with pleasure through her tears on his approach, that she received his soothings with complacency; that finding all

her efforts vain to regain her patroness's affection, her pride struggled with her gratitude, and she found it very difficult to support that, to which at the same time she thought it her duty to submit: he clearly discerned the advantages which might arise from this disposition artfully cultivated, from resentments properly worked up; and he redoubled his assiduities, his soothing, his vows of never ending friendship.

A girl more acquainted with the world, or less innocent of heart, would easily have detected the designs of this insidious man; his eyes, his voice, his manner would have betrayed him: but Persiana, unwarned of deceit, no clue in her own guileless bosom to develop the arts of others, saw nothing in him but the tenderest and most sympathizing

pathizing friendship: she looked with admiration and gratitude on that exquisitely feeling soul which took so kind an interest in her affliction; and after every new vexation, found no other pleasure than meeting him in the garden, pouring her sorrows into his ear, and receiving his equally tender and delicate commiseration.—Dangerous intimacy! Ah! Lady Patterson! to what a precipice have you driven this unfortunate girl!

One evening Lady Patterson had been more peevish than ordinary, and sent the unhappy Persiana to her apartment with a heart almost bursting at the unmerited insults she was every hour receiving; she threw herself into a chair, and deplored in a flood of tears the peculiar cruelty of her destiny.

It

It was a lovely evening in the latter end of June: her apartment looked into the garden, and the window was open by which her chair stood: a honeysuckle, which grew beneath, breathed it's fragrance into the chamber; two nightingales at a small distance filled the calm air with their responsive melody; whilst the moon in mild radiance advanced in the mid heaven, and a few light clouds, silvered by her beams, floated in the atmosphere, now hiding now disclosing the twinkling stars, gave variety by their motions to the scene, and by the contrast of their colour additional richness to the azure concave.

The sorrows of youth are violent, but happily they are easily diverted: insensibly these beauties of nature caught her attention, and dried her tears: she rose from her chair, and
leaned

leaned out of the window more perfectly to enjoy and contemplate the scene.

Persiana had not remained long in this manner, when she heard the steps of a man slowly approaching; as she imagined the family had been some time in bed she was alarmed, and started from the window: by the sound she perceived he drew near, and curiosity brought her once more to it to discover who it was: in that moment he looked up, and she perceived it was Sir George.

“ Miss Merfille not in bed yet !” said he in a very low voice. “ Ah ! my lovely girl, how I have wished to speak three words to you ! Will you indulge me ?”

“ How *can* I, Sir ? The doors are locked on this side the house, so that I cannot get into the garden.”

“ Suffer

“Suffer me,” said he, “to set yonder ladder to your window.”

Without waiting for her reply, he ran to where the gardener had left one standing against the wall, and mounted it ere she had time to recollect the impropriety of the action, or the construction which might be put upon it were it possible any one could witness it. The confusion of her thoughts, the singularity of the request, and the habitual respect and deference she had always entertained for him, prevented her making any violent objection, though she felt an extreme repugnance; but was in the utmost consternation when, as he reached the open sash, he cried—“I cannot speak what I have to say to you *here*, you must permit me to enter,” and actually stepped in, shutting the window down after him.

“Oh

“ Oh Sir George!” she cried, “ for heaven’s sake return instantly? Why will you hazard so strange an action? You can have nothing to say but what may be deferred till to-morrow morning. Oh! return—consider the appearance—think if Lady Patterson—”

“ D—— her,” he cried abruptly, “ I can no longer bear to see you subjected to her tyranny; and I wanted to consult you on the means of extricating you from it.”

“ You are kind, very kind: but indeed I can hear nothing *now*.”

“ Why this alarm, my sweet girl? am I not your *friend*? Oh! Persiana! friendship is too cold a name for what my heart now feels; my whole soul is your’s; my fortune, and life.” He then, seizing her trembling hand, poured out a rhapsody of love; and
made

made use of every argument which a long practice in the art of seduction had furnished him with, to undermine her virtue, and persuade her to leave Lady Patterson, and put herself under his protection.

Confusion, surprise, and horror, at first took from her the power of speech; but when she regained it, the insidious tempter quickly found, from her just indignation and proper spirit, that he had nothing to hope from his proposition; and changing his battery, he affected the deepest contrition for yielding to the dictates of a passion he had found it impossible to repress; and was on his knees before her to solicit her forgiveness, when the door was thrown open with violence, and Lady Patterson and her woman entered.

Persiana sunk back into the elbow chair in speechless terror; Sir George started

started up in confusion; whilst Lady Patterson, in a phrenzy of breathless rage, for a moment contemplated them, then poured out her fury in a torrent of such language, that Persiana, shocked and overpowered by a combination of excruciating sensations, fell from the chair in a swoon.

The woman was running to her assistance, but her lady forbade her in a voice coarse with rage. Sir George, upbraiding the inhumanity of his wife, flew to the unfortunate girl; and whilst he averred her purity by the strongest and most solemn asseverations, he applied himself with assiduous anxiety to recover her.

Lady Patterson, deaf to what he said, but perfectly attentive to his actions, had her fury heightened to such a frantic degree at perceiving his
tender

tender attentions, and attacked him upon it with such virulence, that he could no longer support it; but the moment he saw Persiana recovering he ran out of the room, swearing not to live another day under the same roof: and shutting himself up in another apartment, he rang for his gentleman, to whom he gave orders, that as soon as it was light he should pack up every thing which belonged to him, determining to set off as early in the morning as possible from a mansion which was now grown hateful to him; imagining that when Lady Patterson regained the use of her reason, and perceived her suspicions were without foundation on the side of Persiana, she would be reinstated in her affection.

But that nothing in his power might be omitted to justify that unfortunate

fortunate girl, he busied himself the rest of the night in writing a long letter to his wife, wherein he acknowledged his passion, his criminal intention, and minutely recited the conversation which passed in the chamber so much to Persiana's honour; and recommending her most earnestly to her favour and protection, declared his intention to leave Tragony Castle for ever, and seek in some more peaceful retreat for the quiet which was no more to be found there.

This letter he sent to Lady Patterson's woman, with a charge to deliver it as soon as her lady rose in the morning: and every thing being prepared for his departure, he, about six o'clock, set out in his post chaise and four from Tragony Castle, with a resolution never to enter it's gates again.

CHAPTER VIII.

I go — yet know not where.

HUGHES.

SOON after Sir George had quitted the apartment of Persiana, Lady Patterfon, having vented the acrimony of her heart by every opprobrious epithet, every reproach of taunt and contempt which the most virulent hatred or the most determined malice could suggest, she left her, vowing she should in the morning be thrust out of the house for ever with the shame and ignominy she deserved.

It is impossible to paint the sensations of such a soul as Persiana's on an occasion

caſion ſuch as this, when the warmth of her affections, the quickneſs of her perceptions, and the exquisite delicacy of her ſenſibility, edged into wounding keenneſs thoſe events, which would ſcarcely have been perceived by the blunted feelings of common minds?

Hated by her patroneſs, deceived and criminally purſued by Sir George, her fortune deſtroyed, her reputation blaſted, threatened to be turned with ignominy from that only roof under which ſhe had known ſhelter, into a world where ſhe had not *one* friend to protect or to counſel her—What a contemplation was this!—what a miracle that the excruciating pangs of *ſuch* reflections, did not irritate the jarring nerves to madneſs!

“ And what ſhame,” ſhe cried,
“ will my inſatiate enemy make me
H 2 ſuffer?

suffer? was it for this that from infancy she nourished in my mind such an exquisite sense of it, painted it as the greatest of all evils, and by it's fear withheld me from the most distant approach of wrong? Did she cherish this dread of it, to harass my soul, to torture it the more exquisitely? If I *must* quit this once hospitable roof—ah! is it not enough to be thrust from hence, but must my orphan head be bowed down to the dust with SHAME.

“ To-morrow morning shame and ignominy await me: to-morrow, loaded with this intolerable burthen, am I to be turned into the wild wilderness of the world. If I *must* explore this desert—a desert to *me*, destitute of friends and of fortune—why not seek it to night in peace, and not wait the accumulation of to-morrow's sorrows?

forrows? Yet whither should I go? to whom seek for protection? Oh my God," added she, lifting up her streaming eyes—"THOU who on the world of waters separated me from the dead; who conducted me by thy good Providence to hospitable protectors, that nourished my infancy, and instructed my youth; now, that I suffer a second shipwreck, on the ocean of the world, oh now again, I beseech thee, take me to thy guidance, and lead me over the wild and unknown waste in innocence and peace: in THEE shall be my trust, and I will walk forward fearless.—THOU my friend, thy laws my counsellors, whom else shall I need?"

This sweet enthusiasm calmed the perturbation of her soul; her tears dried up, her features brightened, and

with lightened spirits she rose; and going to her drawers made up as large a parcel of linnen as she could conveniently tye in a silk handkerchief, filling her pockets also, and taking the little casket which contained her mother's trinkets, which had been given into her custody: she put on her hat and cloak, and softly opened the chamber door.

She turned to take a last view of objects endeared by habit. Two pictures, the one of Mr. the other of Mrs. Tragony, were permitted at her own request to decorate her room: with eyes filled with tears, and a bosom heaving with sighs, she gazed alternately on them.

“ You, my friends,” she cried, “ still smile on your Persiana. Are the dead acquainted with what passes in this
sublunary

sublunary scene? Oh! no! for that would dash with bitterness the rich cup of felicity. Farewel, my kind, my invaluable protectors! you took me from the merciless ocean—see me again committing myself to as wide and uncertain a sea. But the POWER who conducted me to *you*, my secondary preservers, can uphold me from being lost in *this* wreck also.

She left the chamber; but instantly returned, recollecting that the keys of the outer doors were carried every night into the house-steward's apartment. What was now to be done? she dreaded more than death encountering the rage of Lady Patterson in the morning, and was determined at all events not to hazard it. The ladder at the window occurred to her recollection; and why not go down that?

She always carried the key of a small gate in the garden in her pocket for the convenience of her's and the children's excursions into the park and the neighbouring wood; nothing so easy therefore as her escape that way.

She shut her door, and softly opened her window: the ladder stood with perfect convenience; throwing her bundle down first, light and agile, she quickly descended, reached the gate, which she unlocked, and locking again put the key in her pocket; and the clock on the stable beat four solemn strokes as she sallied forth into the park. With swift steps she trod the dewy grass across it; and opening the gate which led into the great road, she walked some time by the side of it, uncertain which way to bend her course. She had walked about an hour by the
side

side of the road, when the rattling of a post chaise behind her claimed her attention: she looked back, and perceived it was a returned one; she stopped till it came up, and asking the driver whither he was going, he said to Framwood, which she knew to be a town about twenty miles from them on the London road; she quickly made a bargain with the boy, and stepped in; where we will beg leave to leave her for a short time, whilst we give one look into Tragony Castle.

The perturbations of Lady Patterson's mind had kept her waking till near the time of Sir George's setting out, and then a salutary sleep spread it's welcome oblivion over her imaginary wrongs, which she did not shake off till near noon, when, ringing her bell, her woman entered with the intelligence

intelligence of Sir George's departure, and gave her the letter.

She perused it. Sir George's confession appeared so frank, so sincere, and so unaffected, that it carried conviction of it's truth to the heart of his wife. Lady Patterson was really a good woman where her affection for her husband did not interfere; she became now convinced of Persiana's innocence, and the wrong she had done her flashed painfully on her mind: determined to repair it to the utmost of her power, she instantly rose, and as she was dressing, anticipated in imagination the pleasures of a reconciliation with that amiable girl, for whom she felt a returning tide of affection.

She soon hurried on her cloaths, and on being informed Persiana had not appeared that morning, ran to her chamber

chamber door, where she tapped gently for admission.

All was silent. She tapped louder: she listened: no answer; no noise of any kind. She opened the door and walked in: no Persiana was there. She was sought in her closet: it was plain she had not been in bed. The bell was rang violently, and some servants appeared: none had seen her, or could give any account of her: her window was open and the ladder against it.

“Can any thing be more plain?” cried Lady Patterson in a voice of rage, relapsing into her former phrenzy of passion. “Is it not evident they are gone off together?” Her fury grew too great for expression, and she was carried to her own apartment in violent hysterics.

It

It must be confessed that appearances too much favoured Lady Patterson's conjecture; not a doubt was left in the mind of any of the family. Well as she had been beloved by them, all now execrated the ingratitude of Persiana to her benefactress, and the cruelty of Sir George; both became the objects of general detestation in the neighbourhood, as Lady Patterson was of universal pity.

CHAPTER IX.

But nothing new to him was that same paine,
No paine at all ; for he so oft had tryde
The powre thereof, and lov'd so oft in vaine,
That thing of course he counted love to enter-
taine.

SPENCER.

IGNORANT of the baneful consequences of her hasty flight, our heroine quietly pursued her way to Framwood : she had settled in her mind a kind of plan for her conduct : she determined to go to London, take cheap lodgings, and by advertisements in the public papers endeavour to procure herself a place in some gentleman's family as governess to young ladies.

dies. Though her purse was not very weighty, she thought by frugality there was enough for all expences till she got settled : satisfied of the ease with which all this might be done, her mind became calm, and she alighted at the inn at Framwood in tolerable spirits.

The house was kept by a widow, a woman of great goodness of heart and gentleness of manners ; the beauty and elegance of her guest, the pensiveness of her air, which would sometimes intrude, the uncommon time and odd manner in which the boy informed her he had taken her up, attracted her admiration and excited her curiosity ; which however she had too much good sense by impertinent questions to seek to gratify : but as this singular lady had desired to be as far from company

pany as possible, she led her to an upper apartment, and attended her herself; informing her, on her enquiring after it, that a stage coach would pass by in about two hours, in which the hostess was desired to procure a place.

Persiana ate her breakfast with a very good appetite, and then amused herself with looking out of a window, as her room fronted the street. She had stood but a short time, when a travelling post chaise and four drove up to the door, and a gentleman alighted from it, whom, to her unspeakable astonishment, she perceived to be Sir George Patterson, attended by two servants whom she also knew. She stepped back, thinking herself fortunate that none had turned their eyes towards her.

As

As our heroine was not sufficiently recovered from her swoon when Sir George quitted her apartment, to hear him declare his intention to leave the castle, his appearance at this juncture suggested no other idea than his being in pursuit of her; and equally solicitous of being out of the reach of his illicit passion, as of Lady Patterson's rage, she was in agonies lest she should be discovered to him.

She heard the hostess called; it was too late now to caution her; she imagined the most minute enquiries were going forward: every noise alarmed her; every foot which ascended the stairs she fancied bent it's course towards the room she was in, and she almost fainted when at last the hostess really tapt at the door of her apartment.

The

The intelligence she brought, however, relieved from a weight of apprehension, the mind of her fluttered guest:—it was, that the stage coach was at the door, and there was a place for her in it.

She pulled her hat close over her face, wrapped herself in her cloak, and without once looking behind, hastily ran up the steps which were set for that purpose, and with very little ceremony placed herself in the vehicle, her mind so absorbed in the fear of being seen by Sir George, that another occasion of fear never once occurred to her, that probably, as it came from Trenton, the place where they bought all their marketings, she might, in the coach, find somebody with whom she was acquainted.

She was no sooner seated but she recollected the circumstance. She looked round, but they were all strange faces, and she endeavoured to compose her spirits and appear chearful.

The company, which consisted of a young officer ; a country clergyman, his wife, and daughter ; and another clergyman ; were all busied in examining their new companion, the view of whom gave them very different sensations.

The young lady, who, (there being no other young woman present, had engrossed the attention of the officer,) saw with disquiet his eyes fixed with an expression of admiration on our heroine, and beheld this potent rival with a tolerable share of envy, as likely to deprive her of those regards which were the more flattering and gratifying
from

from her not being accustomed to them; for indeed she was no beauty.

For the same reason she was regarded by the mother with looks of anger and disgust: nothing perhaps gives more delight to the maternal bosom, than the admiration which a darling daughter excites: of this satisfaction Mrs. Moyston had hitherto partaken but sparingly; she therefore sipped with a keener relish the delicious cup which this morning had unexpectedly brought her, anticipated in imagination the triumphs of her daughter over the Misses of her acquaintance, in engrossing so very pretty a fellow, and could not behold without some very unpleasant sensations, her hopes so suddenly dashed to the ground.

Mr. Moyston, with the happy apathy of sixty two, thought her a very

pretty lass, and then proceeded to enumerate the mistakes of the Minister, and to place the national affairs upon a much better footing.

The other clergyman, to whom his conversation was addressed, and who looked twenty years younger, gave tokens of not possessing such ardent patriotic principles; and that his curiosity was more excited at the appearance of an object so uncommonly interesting, than his attention fixed on the public weal.

Captain Thomson was a very elegant and amiable young man; but his heart possessed such a propensity to falling in love, that he had been influenced by a passion for one or other fair enslaver from his earliest youth: susceptible thus of tender impressions, it would have been wonderful if the charms

charms of our heroine had not touched him: it is true, that a few hours before he had sworn eternal love to a young lady where he had been visiting, but the absent object was very prone, in his heart, to give way to the present, and in contemplating the graces of Persiana he now forgot those of Eliza.

Unconscious of being the object of general attention, Persiana endeavoured to appear as easy, and by every little civility to make herself as agreeable as possible to the company she was in: but though she tried to assume an air of chearfulness, the pensiveness which frequently stole over her fine features, her involuntary sighs, and the reveries in which she was often absorbed, gave evident tokens that her mind was ill at ease. The ladies, who, where vanity was not concerned were really

good sort of women, on perceiving that she really appeared unconscious of her own attractions, and was plainly an object more of pity than envy, suffered their displeasure at her superiority of charms to subside, and indulged in their breasts the more gentle emotions of humanity.

But to the generous bosom of the youthful soldier, she became a thousand times more interesting from appearing to be unhappy. Beauty in distress! how awakening to the feelings; with what energy it strikes the chords of such a heart! Like the Knights in the days of Chivalry, he longed to declare himself her champion, and engage that monster of unhappiness! which could heave with sighs so fair a bosom.

When

When they arrived at the place where they dined, he endeavoured by the most unremitting attention to render himself interesting to her: but though she received all his civilities with the utmost politeness, had she been asked whether they had been tendered by a young man or an old one, she could not have justly answered.

As they had many miles to go e'er they reached the place where they were to sleep, the coachman did not suffer them to linger long at their dinner, and they were soon on the road again.

If my fair reader has ever travelled in a stage coach, she will know, that a very unpleasant part of that business is the driver's stopping so frequently at the alehouses on the road, sometimes to take a parcel, but oftener a dram.

At one of these places the vehicle which contained our party was standing, the horses refreshing with a pail of water, the coachman with a quarter of Hollands, when Persiana, hearing the rattling of a carriage behind, looked out, and was inexpressibly frightened at perceiving it to be that of Sir George Patterson; and as his foreglass was down, and he was looking earnestly forward, she fancied she had caught his eye.

Pale as death she suddenly drew herself up into the corner of the carriage; but what was her consternation at hearing his voice instantly calling to the postillions "stop! stop!"

The carriage stopped, and nearly opposite to the stage, but something forwarder, so that he could only see those who sat backward, and Persiana
sat

sat with her face to the horses, the side next the chaise.

Her apprehensions of discovery were indeed instantly dispelled by Sir George's informing his servant that one of the horses had a stone in his foot; but her extreme fright was so obvious, that Mr. Bringloe—so was the younger clergyman called—caught her hand, and called to the man of the house to bring water to a lady who was fainting.

“ Oh no, no,” she cried, in a whispering voice. “ I beseech you, Sir, not to hinder the coachman—tell him to get forward—I shall be well when he goes on.”

“ Why now,” said Mr. Moynton with a smile at his own sagacity, “ sure, Miss, 'tis not the handsome man in the chariot that frightens you so? shall I tell

I tell him how affected you are by a glimpse of him, and desire him to make an apology?"

"Oh! Sir, for heaven's sake!" she answered in the same low tone of voice, "do not speak to him unless you wish me to expire at your feet. Intreat the coachman to go forwards. I beseech you let him get on."

"Here you coachman," called out Captain Thomson, "d—n you where are you? are we to wait here all day, rascal, whilst you are guzzling your gin? Get into your box this instant, or I'll blow your brains out."

However before the coachman thought proper to obey this peremptory command, the stone being taken from the horse's hoof, and Sir George too absorbed in his own reflections to attend to what was passing in his neighbourhood,

bourhood, his carriage set off at a rate which seemed to give very little chance of the coach's overtaking it again, and relieved Persiana's mind of all dread of the rencontre; her colour returned, and she was able to sit upright.

But Mr. Moyston, who with great natural torpidity was sometimes seized with an inclination to be witty, and dearly loved what he called a joke, that is, saying any rude thing which came uppermost, which he perceived painful to another, though without the least ill natured intention, for having no feelings himself it was impossible for him to respect the feelings of others; indeed for this practice he might plead the *humane* advice of Pope:

Laugh at your friends, and if your friends are sore,
So much the better—you may laugh the more.

Where

Where the fine edge of the wit compensates for the keenness of the satire, we *may* perhaps endure the pain of the one, in consideration of the beauty of the other; but to be lacerated, mangled, and bruised by a woodman's axe is beyond the sufferance of any human patience: this dull joker, with many a witless jest, continued to tease Persiana with the handsome gentleman in the chariot and four.

"Nay now, Miss, own it is some sweetheart."

"Indeed, Sir, I shall acknowledge no such thing."

"Well, you will leave us to our own thoughts on the matter?"

"I do; and sincerely wish—pardon me—that those thoughts were confined to your own bosoms."

"I am sorry, Miss, I have put you out of humour: a proof," added he, affecting

affecting archness, that he is not *indifferent* to you."

Captain Thomson, who had been some time silent, that moment looked at her; their eyes met; she blushed.

"Ah! hah! Miss!" said Moyston, "I perceive by your colouring how it is. What say you, Captain?" added he, clapping the officer on the knee, "what would you give to be in his cloaths?"

"The Indies if I possessed them," answered he with a sigh.

"La now papa!" said Miss Betsey, if it was Miss's humble servant she would not have been so much afraid of being seen by him."

"Poh fool," said the father, "she would not be seen by a man of his grandeur in a stage coach. It would ruin her fortune for ever."

Persiana

Persiana could not help smiling at this conceit. "It must be confessed, Sir," said she, "that you have infinite penetration: and now you have made this acknowledgment, will you be kind enough to drop a subject which I assure you gives me no pleasure?"

"Oh, ay Miss, to be sure, I will joke no more if you desire it: but I *knew* I was right; ay, ay, let me alone; yes, yes, I knew——"

Harrassed with the fear of again meeting Sir George, and lost in painful conjectures on the occasion of his journey, Persiana was very little alive to the company the rest of the afternoon; she was silent, absent, and evidently unhappy. Captain Thomson, though extremely attentive to her, was very little talkative; but the silence of this part of the company was sufficiently compen-

compensated by the loquacity of the rest; and Mrs. Moyston and her daughter made themselves large amends in their own ideas in their display of superior understanding and knowledge, for the superiority of the stranger's beauty; and Mr. Bringloe, who was exceedingly attentive to all that passed, and seemed to be fond of investigating characters, finding he could draw no matter of amusement from the other two, diverted himself with these, and fully gratified his own humour, and their vanity at the same time, by his questions, his affected ignorance, and pretended wonder.

CHAPTER X.

Yet speak, thy soul, afflicted as thou art!
Speak then, and give thy lab'ring bosom vent;
My pity is—my friendship shall be thine.

MALLET.

AS Captain Thomson's regiment was quartered at the town where our stage coach party were to sleep, his journey ended there; but he could not deny himself the satisfaction of supping with our heroine: he felt an invincible regret at parting from her, though from the imagined pre-engagement of her heart he could not entertain the most distant idea of success. After supper he engaged her in a separate conversation, and endeavoured
in

in the most delicate manner to gain some knowledge of her name, her family, and the part of the town to which she was going, but had the mortification to find all his enquiries baffled, and himself left without the most distant clue to either.

He took his leave for the evening; but though the coach set out by four the next morning, he was up as early as those who were to go in it; and with many tender wishes, soft pressures of the hand, and long drawn sighs—symptoms of a passion which would have flattered and delighted most girls of her age, so insensible was Persiana rendered by the deep pre-occupation of her thoughts, that she did not perceive them: she however expressed herself very sorry at losing so agreeable a companion; but he was too well

versed in the female heart to mistake politeness for partiality; and the compliment gave him no pleasure: but unable to support the idea of for ever losing sight of her, as an indispensable engagement prevented his going to town himself, he put a confidential servant into the basket of the coach, to watch her motions, and discover to what place she went.

Moyston, who prided himself in his sagacity in discovering what a person must have had no eyes not to perceive, as he had been forbidden to speak any more of the gentleman in the chariot and four, joked, as he called it, without mercy with Persiana on the passion of the poor Captain; and Bringlee, who had incessantly watched in expectation, by some unguarded word, to develop the mystery which seemed

to surround her, now addressed the chief of his conversation to her. At perfect ease in regard to this imputed lover, she replied to the jests of Moyston with much pleasantry, and answered the sensible discourse of Bringloe with a spirit and animation he did not expect.

Bringloe's education had been liberal; he had much literary knowledge, joined to a perfect acquaintance with men and manners: few could pierce with keener penetration the recesses of the heart, or develope with nicer accuracy the real character; yet there was something in this young lady which puzzled him extremely: the innocence of her look, the dignity and elegance of her manners, the virtue and nobleness of her sentiments, denoted her not only of the *best* but of

the *bigbest* order of mankind: yet at her tender age alone, unattended, taken up at a paltry inn in a small town upon the road, alarmed at the approach of every carriage, terrified almost into fits at the appearance of one man of figure—what was he to think?

With the most consummate art he endeavoured to gain her esteem; and in his conversation took care to display sentiments so liberal, so noble, so just, and so delicate, that he succeeded to his utmost wish. Tired of the nauseous jests of Moyston, and the impertinence of the wife and daughter, she listened to him, pleased at having found a mind so congenial with her own: and innocent and inexperienced in the human heart, imagined that the conversation must be a transcript of the
soul,

foul, ignorant that it required different talents to talk well, and to act justly.

The spirits of Persiana held tolerably well till after dinner: but when they were re-seated in the coach, she reflected that the next time they stepped out it would be in that great city, of which and it's inhabitants she was alike ignorant: she had heard much of the swarm of sharpers with which that place abounds; she knew not who to apply to for advice to avoid their deception; what was she to do with herself when she arrived there? how was she to procure lodgings? who would take into their house a person whom no one knew, whom none could recommend? A thousand painful questions of this kind she asked herself, without being able to answer one: and her unsupported and friend-

less state bore so heavy on her imagination, that it was with difficulty she restrained her tears. Every milestone which they passed, as being so much nearer the end of her journey, seemed to give her additional terrors.

Bringloe remarked her encreasing uneasiness, and endeavoured by the most sprightly sallies to divert and amuse her: she listened to him indeed, but it was with an air as if she knew not what he said; and her mouth sometimes formed itself to a smile, whilst her eye was devoid of that sparkle of pleasure which distinguishes it from grimace.

The Moyltons were set down at a village about ten miles short of the capital. "How far are we from London, Sir?" said she, the moment the door

door shut after them. "Ten miles, Madam," was the answer.

"Only ten miles!" she exclaimed. "Good heavens only *one* short hour and then!——" Her agony was so great at the reflection of her encreasing difficulties that she burst into a flood of tears.

Bringloe fixed his eyes upon her with an air of tender compassion. "Pardon, Madam," said he, "a curiosity which your extreme agitation has awakened; but surely some peculiar fate awaits you, which occasions these painful emotions."

"Alas!" she replied, clasping her hands in agony, "I know not *what* fate awaits me: yet sure it must be bitter, if it is worse than I have already experienced."

“ I fear being thought impertinent, Madam; yet who can see so much beauty and virtue in distress without being too much interested for common forms? I am, 'tis true, a stranger; yet I flatter myself if you knew me I should not be found unworthy your confidence. Perhaps I might be happy enough to render you some service. I should think myself honoured by your commands.”

“ How good you are, Sir !”

“ Commend not my goodness, Madam, till you put it to the test : and suffer me to obviate some objections which your prudence may suggest against your accepting the offered services of a stranger. You are young and beautiful ; I am a man, and one of whose character you are utterly unacquainted : but I am of a profession
in

in which vice is universally discouraged, and at an age when the passions give up their mad guidance to reason and honour ; the sacerdotal character ought to be some security to you, and your father I imagine is not more than forty six. Your modesty and propriety of conduct, your good sense, and just and liberal sentiments, I own have caught hold of my affections ; but they are not the affections of a *young* man, Madam ; not such as we parted from this morning : with such a one it would be indeed dangerous to trust yourself ; my heart is only sensible to paternal tenderness, the love of a father for a beautiful daughter ; such an affection, as I imagine, in our disembodied state, where there is no marrying or giving in marriage, we shall feel for each other ; the love of soul for soul :
such

such, Madam, is the passion you have awakened in my breast, and which will find it's gratification in being allowed to contribute to your happiness: it is friendship, and a friendship of the purest kind: suffer me to solicit your's in return: if on farther acquaintance you find me unworthy such a blessing, then withdraw it."

"Oh! Sir, your words bear so many marks of genuine goodness, that I cannot doubt their reality, and your offered friendship is too flattering to such a forlorn wretch as myself not to be accepted with transport. Oh! it is the most fortunate circumstance—it is one of the happiest incidents of my life; for you see before you Sir the most wretched of her sex; with the most perfect innocence, branded with the name of guilt; thrown by a combination

bination of the most cruel circumstances, from habitual affluence to abject poverty; thrust from the roof which had sheltered my helpless infancy, into a world where I am utterly unknown; shuddering as I approach that great city, where I have not one friend to receive me, and conduct my inexperienced steps."

"Your pathetic story, Madam, would extract tears from marble. But what are your prospects?"

"As my education has been a liberal one, and I have been used to the tuition of children, I could wish to be received into some family as governess to young ladies."

"I have not a doubt, my dear Madam, but I can procure you such an establishment; for I have the honour of being in habits of intimacy with
some

some of the first families in the kingdom; but in the interim, as you have no friend to receive you in town, your accommodation there must be the first consideration. I have a female relation, a woman of the most unblemished and irreproachable character, over whom I am well assured I have sufficient influence to induce her to receive you; and under *her* protection you will be safe and happy, whilst I look round for an agreeable situation; for she has a most excellent heart, and is one of the sweetest tempered creatures in the universe."

" Oh Sir ! words are inadequate—"

" I insist upon your repressing the effusions of a heart which I perceive is too sensible of small benefits: the obligation is wholly on my side; for I really have more pleasure in contributing

ing

ing to your happiness, than you have in receiving my trifling services: but by what name shall I announce you?"

"I will Sir, at some fit opportunity, recount to you my melancholy tale; when you will find I have no legal right to *any*; but as *that* which I have hitherto borne, might discover me, by some unsuspected means, to a man whom it concerns my honour to secrete myself from, would it not be better to assume another?"

"I think it would."

"Be so kind then, Sir, as to call me Melcombe."

The coach was by this time arrived in town: a hackney one was called; in which our heroine and her new friend was carried to the lady's house he mentioned. Bringloe left Persiana in the carriage while he stepped in to
prepare

prepare his relation to receive her. He found her at home and alone, and quickly gained her permission; for she was, as he told Persiana when he led her into the house, one of the best tempered women breathing.

This lady received Persiana with an air of much kindness. “ You never, cousin,” said she, “ did a more obliging thing than bringing this charming young lady to me, for I should have been obliged, contrary to my inclination, to stay in town this summer; and as almost every creature is flown into the country, I was dying with *ennui* for want of company. Sit down on this sofa by me, my dear Madam; you have had a tedious and fatiguing journey: you shall have some coffee immediately. Cousin Bringloe, we will not part with you till after supper: we
will

will have something light at an early hour, and we will discard him soon after, Madam, that you may retire to your repose in good time."

This good humoured civility dispelled all those cruel apprehensions which had for so many hours tortured the bosom of Persiana: she thought herself the most fortunate creature on earth in the unexpected acquisition of two such friends. She endeavoured to express her sense of the obligation, but on that subject she was enjoined silence, though these good people seemed to hear her with great pleasure on any other. The evening was spent in the most pleasant manner imaginable; and our heroine was conducted to an elegant apartment by her obliging hostess; where, her bosom swelling with gratitude, and the sweet illusions of hope

hope gilding her prospects, she passed a very different night from the preceding.

CHAPTER XI.

With flattering words he sweetly wooed her,
And offered fair gifts to allure her sight.

SPENCER.

UNUSED to the noises of the town, Persiana awoke some hours before the time a modern belle encloses her eyes. She arose: her bundle, all her baggage, had been brought into her apartment, and she opened it for some clean linen. She had put into it a fine muslin dress, which took up but little room, and she thought herself

self fortunate in having so done, as the one she had on was somewhat the worse for having travelled two days in a stage coach.

But the inspection of her scanty wardrobe gave her pain. "I must," said she with a sigh, "buy me some cloaths: an expence my purse can ill afford: but it will, I hope, enable me to procure what is absolutely necessary till my good friends point me out a mode of subsistence; and I must consult Mrs. Dennis, (which was the name of Mr. Bringloe's friendly cousin,) on the most frugal manner of laying out my money."

Having dressed herself with her usual neatness, she threw up the window, and sat herself down to view the moving picture, which the busy crowd in a large street exhibit. The scene

was novel; but whilst she was intently gazing on it, she was herself as much remarked by a servant in livery, who walked two or three times on the other side of the way. It was the servant which Captain Thomson had ordered to follow her: he had attended the hackney coach; but in the twilight not being quite certain of the house, he had returned thus early to mark it, and make enquiries after its inhabitants of the tradesmen in the neighbourhood. By seeing Persiana at the window he was certain of not being mistaken, and having obtained all the information in his power, he departed to find a conveyance down to his master.

After some time, Mrs. Dennis tapped at the chamber door, to enquire how her fair guest had rested, and to
invite

invite her to breakfast; which while they partook together, Persiana communicated to her new friend the scanty state both of her wardrobe and finances; and a consultation ensued on the most proper method of replenishing the first. But the rigid œconomy of our heroine did not meet with the approbation of Mrs. Dennis: in that lady's ideas a showy dress was indispensable, in Persiana's a simple neatness had the preference, and it was difficult to adjust their different tastes to each other, but much more so to our heroine's purse.

Mrs. Dennis insisted upon being her banker: Persiana could not bear the idea of running in debt: Mrs. Dennis, however, had an overpowering eloquence; she was not to be denied; she laughed at our heroine's *narrow*

way of thinking, ridiculed her quaker like taste, assured her she would be different from every creature in the world, and she would be ashamed to shew herself to that polite company to whom she wished to introduce her. Arguments like these are generally irresistible: but Persiana, who did not easily give up when she thought herself in the right, and was not yet perfectly convinced she was wrong, though she was full of acknowledgments for the intended kindness, could not consent to lay herself under unnecessary obligations till she had heard the opinion of Mr. Bringloe.

That gentleman soon made his appearance, and to his decision the dispute was referred, who gave it clearly for his relation; for he assured Persiana that a genteel dress was necessary to
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procure her proper respect in the polite world; and the money which was to be advanced not worth her thinking about, as it could be repayed with such ease out of the first profits of her establishment in a very noble family which he had in his eye for her; who at present indeed was out of town; but that he would write to the Duchess in a day or two in such a manner that he assured himself he should not be denied.

Persiana found Mr. Bringloe's arguments more convincing than those of Mrs. Dennis. She consented to be governed by their ideas of propriety, and in three days, with the assistance of the milliners, mantua makers, &c. whom Mrs. Dennis introduced to her, our heroine in her appearance exhibited quite the woman of fashion.

It had been found impossible to stir out till Persiana had thrown off the rusticity of her appearance. That important change effected, Mrs. Dennis longed for a little fresh air in the park : a desire which met with no opposition from her guest, who, accustomed to the refreshing breezes of the country, found the closeness of the town in the summer sometimes almost insupportable : a coach was therefore ordered to convey them thither ; and Mr. Bringloe, who had some business at another part of the town, turned from them to dispatch it that he might meet them there.

As almost all the fashionable world had quitted town, there was scarcely one in the mall beside themselves. They had taken a turn or two, and then seated themselves, when Mr. Bringloe

Bringloe approached, accompanied by another gentleman of very elegant appearance, much younger than himself.

The stranger was evidently struck with the beauty of our heroine. Another promenade was proposed, and he attached himself entirely to her. She found his conversation lively and entertaining, and was not sorry when Mrs. Dennis invited him with Mr. Bringloe home to dinner, tho' she was somewhat surprised when she heard the invitation addressed to him under the title of my Lord : but as his Lordship had familiarized himself by his previous behaviour, she did not feel herself much awed by his superior rank, and by her good sense and sparkling wit, convinced his Lordship that her mind was as admirable as her person ; and altogether he found her so irresistibly

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bly attractive, that he could not tear himself from the house of Mrs. Dennis till a very late hour. At last he departed, taking Mr. Bringloe with him.

The moment the Earl of Norman-ton (for such was the title of that nobleman) left the room—"I congratulate you, Miss Melcombe," said Mrs. Dennis; "you have made a most important conquest."

"What mean you, Madam?"

"My meaning is pretty obvious, my dear, so do not affect ignorance; you must have perceived how deeply his Lordship is enamoured with your charms."

"With mine, Madam?" said she with a deep blush. "But I am glad to see you in such spirits this evening."

"I vow

"I vow I was never more serious in my life; and it gives me vast satisfaction, for he is immensely rich, generous to profusion, and you may make just what you please of him."

"Make of him!" repeated Persiana, with an air of surprise. "I am at a loss, Madam, to guess your meaning."

"Pretty simplicity! You will be enabled to discover it when his Lordship declares himself. I am glad however my cousin Bringloe has not yet written to the Duchesse."

"Dear Madam! it is very improbable that his Lordship should think of such an obscure girl as myself."

"Not think of you! I'll stake my honour he thinks of nothing else. But good night, my dear; go to bed, and dream

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dream of rank, equipage, and all the joys of high life."

To say that a girl of eighteen found no gratification in perceiving a man of quality in her chains, would be deemed by all who are acquainted with the human heart extremely improbable: but if our heroine possessed some share of vanity, she had at the same time a much larger portion of pride, which proved an admirable corrective of it.

Perfectly assured of the nobility of her own extraction, she there met Lord Normanton upon equal ground: but obscured as it was by accident, divested of every external advantage, she had at present no other method of making out her title to it than by a dignity, a superiority of soul, an elevation of sentiment, and a reserved and guarded conduct worthy of it: upon
which

which, if she should ever be providentially restored to her family, she could look back without a blush.

This had ever been her resolution, from which not even the adulation of Lord Normanton could incline her to deviate. When she laid her head on her pillow, and brought, as was her custom, the incidents of the day in review before her, she took her heart severely to task for the foolish pleasure it had been sensible to in his attentions and flattery. It was highly improbable a man of rank and fortune should take for his wife a girl whom nobody knew: she turned with impatient and offended pride from the idea of his thinking to gain her on any other terms; for even if he offered himself as an husband, she was not certain she should accept him: “in that case,”
said

said she, " I must have time to examine his character before I can decide. He may be superior to *my* deserts, but I must not take for my husband a man who would disgrace my family when I discover it."

Amiable visionary ! who shall blame thy romance when by it virtue is rendered permanent, and prudence infused into the action of vivacious and inconsiderate youth !

" As the respected friend," she continued, " of my generous patrons, I must see him with civility, but I will see him also with reserve. As I cannot shut my ears to his conversation, I will endeavour to convince him that he injures my understanding in supposing me capable of being pleased with flattery. If he persists in his particular behaviour I must act as I perceive

perceive his intentions to be; my virtuous friends will protect me from an unwarrantable address, and a serious one I shall myself take time to decide upon.

When Persiana went down into the breakfast room in the morning, she was surprised to find Lord Normanton already there, sitting by Mrs. Dennis. His Lordship addressed her with great familiarity, which received a considerable check from the reserved air and grave look of our heroine.

An arch smile from Mrs. Dennis pointed out the occasion of this visit, which, though it suffused her cheeks with a deeper glow, called up all the pride of her heart; and she seated herself with infinitely more assumed dignity than she would have done as
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the *acknowledged* daughter of a man of quality.

After the first compliments—"My friend Bringloe, Madam," said he, "told me last night that he was particularly engaged this morning, which was the reason that I paid my devoirs thus early, lest you should want an escort to any public place, where I should be superlatively happy to be permitted to attend you!"

Persiana politely declined the offer: but not so Mrs. Dennis; she thanked his Lordship for his obligingness, protested she had not the least inclination to sit moping at home, and rallied Persiana entirely out of her inclination of so doing. The day was spent in rambling from one place to another, and the evening at the Hay Marker, which, as Persiana had never before
seen

seen a play, afforded her a very high pleasure, for the comedy happened to be a very good one, and exceedingly well acted.

In the early part of the day, Lord Normanton was very profuse of his compliments; but before it ended, Persiana convinced him that it really was possible for a woman to be disgusted with flattery: he learned as much to respect her understanding as he had before admired her person and the brilliance of her wit; and awed by the mingled dignity and modesty of her deportment, he was careful to repress every light and improper expression. He dropped the forward familiarity of his manner, and treated this unknown and obscure country girl with the deference and respect due to a woman of fashion: and when he departed,

departed, Mrs. Dennis, who ascribed to art the dictates of true honour, commended her conduct very highly.

Several days passed over in this manner. Persiana, though totally ignorant of established forms, unacquainted with that nice point in female conduct, as far as which virtue may indulge without fear of censure, but not a hair's breadth beyond it on pain of infamy: yet warned by a natural sense of decorum, she remonstrated with Mrs. Dennis on the impropriety of being constantly attended to public places, and suffering themselves to be treated by a man so particular in his conduct as Lord Normanton, yet of whose views they were by no means assured. She was ridiculed for her unfashionable niceties, her *outrée* opinions, and was obliged to yield to the
torrent

torrent she could not stem. She was carried to every place of public diversion, shewn every thing worthy of attention, and, as she was not devoid of that curiosity incident to young and ingenious minds, the gratification would have been highly pleasing could she have been satisfied there was no impropriety in the company.

Of his Lordship's behaviour, indeed, she had no reason to complain. He had exchanged the air of conscious superiority for that of the most profound respect; his rhapsody of compliments for broken sighs and stolen glances; his open unqualified flattery of her person, for the more artful and insinuating, though distant approbation of her sentiments, and a watchful attention to every glance which could

discover the hidden wishes of her soul, which he was assiduous to gratify e'er they were disclosed.

A conduct so delicate, so conciliating to female vanity, lost with her none of it's merit; for she, who would have proudly scorned him had he preserved his superior air, when he became humbled before her, a strong sense of the *real* inequality of their present stations, placed his humility in the proper point of view. But still she was not satisfied with being eternally out with him in public places, which, she told Mrs. Dennis, among many other objections, looked like gratifying her curiosity by taking advantage of his wish to oblige her.

That lady and our heroine continued to have many debates on the subject.

What

What Mrs. Dennis's part of the argument wanted in reason and delicacy, when balanced against Persiana's, was abundantly compensated by an unanswerable laugh of ridicule at her want of knowledge of the world, and the repetition of some emphatic words of irresistible power, as outree ! ridiculous ! narrow-soul'd ideas ! illiberal sentiments ! What reason, what argument could weigh against exclamations and interjections such as these ?

Mr. Bringloe, (whom now she seldom saw, for he had a declared aversion to public places, and Mrs. Dennis and her party were seldom at home,) she could not consult as she wished to have done upon this occasion ; for she never could happen of him by himself, and she did not care to let Mrs.

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Dennis

Dennis perceive a want of confidence in her, by requesting a private interview. When she did see him, she thought he appeared dispirited and uneasy; and upon those occasions she never failed, by the most obliging attentions, and by every little amusing method, to endeavour to enliven him and dissipate his chagrin; but could never perceive her efforts had the wished effect, and the observation gave her uneasiness, as she really felt a filial affection for him. She mentioned it to Mrs. Dennis, but that lady persuaded her she was mistaken, and that he was just the same as ever she knew him.

At last, Lord Normanton taking advantage one morning of Mrs. Dennis's *accidentally* going out of the room for something she wanted, declared

clared those sentiments of which he had before given too strong implications much to surprise our heroine; and the declaration was accompanied with that timidity which ever marks a real passion; and was made with all that explicitness highly proper in the apparent disparity of their situations in life; and without which, he had penetration sufficient to discover, Persiana would not have listened to him a moment.

Though from his late behaviour Persiana had every reason to expect this eclaircissement, yet she was too confused and embarrassed to make any immediate answer; and Mrs. Dennis entering, for that time ended the conference.

But the ice once broken, his Lordship found no difficulty in renewing
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the conversation, which he did that evening as they walked in Vauxhall Gardens; and though he could not bring her to an immediate decision in his favour, he yet had no reason to despair of success.

Her heart had never known any predilection in favour of another: his person was rather handsome than otherwise; his manners marked the man of fashion; his conversation was lively and amusing; his understanding above mediocrity, and if he possessed not the utmost refinement of sentiment, or rigidity of honour, he perfectly knew how to assume the semblance of both: add to these, a fortune large and unincumbered, high rank, and splendid taste, and then tell me what our fair foundling could object to him?

True

True she did not find in her own heart that ardour, that fervency of affection which he professed to feel for her; she neither sunk into melancholy at his absence nor fluttered into convulsions on his unexpected approach; she experienced no other sensations than *esteem* for an amiable and agreeable man, and *gratitude* for that disinterested affection which was to lift her from the most forlorn and deserted state, to wealth and grandeur.

“ It would be the highest ingratitude,” said she to herself, as she reflected on all these things on her pillow, “ to keep so disinterested, so generous a heart one moment in suspense: he has been too delicate to enquire into the particulars of my story, which I never have found any opportunity to communicate to Mr. Bringloe

love, or inclination to tell to Mrs. Dennis; but I will inform him of the whole; and I will open my whole soul to him. If he approves of a girl of unknown origin, and blasted character, for a wife, if he will be content with the sentiment of esteem and friendship, in return for a warmer passion, I will no longer hesitate."

On these ingenuous principles she governed herself: for finding him in the parlour when she went down in the morning, and Mrs. Dennis taking herself out of the room the moment breakfast was over, he renewed the conversation of the evening before, and she then, in the most frank and explicit manner unfolded her sentiments and her story to him.

Though he had very great pleasure in hearing her talk, yet the beautiful,
animated,

animated, and varying expression of her countenance, as she recited her little pathetic tale, was so much more the object of his admiration, that he attended much less to *what* she said than the *manner* of it; and had he been questioned concerning her story half an hour after, could not I believe have repeated a single circumstance.

But he felt himself much more interested in those sentiments which related to himself. It would have given him the most exquisite delight to have received the soft confession of reciprocal love; but as he had no mean opinion of his own accomplishments, he flattered himself with soon being able to inspire her with an equal tenderness, and gave himself up to rapture on her consenting to be his, though he could not induce her to fix the day, and he

left her very reluctantly to attend some business which required his presence.

He had been gone out of the room but a few minutes, when Bringloe entered. As the author of her opening happy prospects, Persiana regarded him with the most fervent gratitude; and in the fullness and warmth of her heart she poured out the most animated expressions of it, blessing him as her preserver in the hour of distress and despair.

Her own emotions prevented her in a great measure from attending to his; yet she was surprised to see with what coldness he heard her: that instead of expressing pleasure at her approaching union with Lord Normanton, his countenance wore more an air of sorrow and compassion; and she was
hinting

hinting at her fears that some secret grief oppressed his mind, and he was looking as if he wished to communicate it to her, when Mrs. Dennis entered the room: he took up his hat, and walked out abruptly.

As Mrs. Dennis had before discouraged Persiana's remarks on the change in Mr. Bringloe's manner, she said nothing of it now, expecting that he would himself confess the reason at their next interview; but received her congratulations on the eclairsissement which Lord Normanton had informed her had taken place between himself and our heroine, with great cheerfulness; she however found herself disappointed in seeing Mr. Bringloe; for his Lordship, who joined them at dinner, informed them that he had about an hour before set out for the country

country to attend a near relation, who was supposed at the point of death; and to his being acquainted with the danger of his friend she imputed the melancholy which had marked his behaviour, and rendered him incapable of participating her pleasure.

Persiana now no longer objected to the attendance of her noble lover: he spent almost every hour with her which was not devoted to sleep or the toilet, and every day brought her some rich or elegant present, which though from innate delicacy she accepted with reluctance, yet, as from a man who was most assuredly soon to become her husband, she could not refuse.